



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate the Merciful



SPIRITUAL TRADITION
An Introduction to Islamic Mysticism
and its History

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Publisher's Forward

To begin and execute a research is like walking in the path of development and evolution. When the seeds of the "questions" are planted, in the soil of the mind of the researcher, this phase initiates, and its end is culminated when the result and the outcome of knowledge and wisdom is gained.

Evidently, this end is a new chapter in itself, for growth, and announces beforehand this good news to humans. For the result of all those mental efforts will not only bring the blooming and flowering of talent and all kinds of Blessings to humans, but it also makes the mind of the researcher to ponder and shape new, more questions.

This will produce a great collection of growing plants and flowers for the seeking mind... Those "questions" are in fact, the seeds, which according to the necessities of Time and the strength of the researchers will grow and bloom by themselves. They will make Culture and Civilization to move forward.

In like manner, the increasing rate of transferring oneself from one place to another place and the decrease of the distances will make those seeds travel miles and miles, to faraway places, in order to install them inside the curious mind of other seekers. This will bring an amazing diversity and a novelty for another civilization...

It is true then, that the presence of knowledge and a good, capable management will help this project to develop itself and one has to admit indeed, that it has always played an important role...

Al-Mustafa International Publication and Translation Center, because of its global mission, and its special position among the Religious Schools and the colorful human diversity that it has developed inside itself, sees it as a moral duty to procure all the appropriate conditions for any research works, and takes its role in this matter, most seriously. To procure all kinds of necessary grounds, with an excellent management of all the existing possibilities and talents, and to care and protect all its researchers in religious fields; these are the most crucial responsibilities of the Department of Research in this International center.

We dearly hope that by being attentive to all these autonomous scientific movements, and by fortifying all the existing motives, we shall be able to witness the blooming of the Religious Culture in every part of this wide world!

**Al-Mustafa International
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Contents

<i>Transliteration</i>	IX
<i>foreword</i>	XI
Author's Note	1
Part One: The Nature and Genealogy of Mysticism	5
Mysticism and Philosophy	5
Terminology of <i>Taşawwuf</i> and 'Irfān.....	8
What is <i>Taşawwuf</i> , or 'Irfān?	12
Mystical (' <i>Irfānī</i>) Knowledge and Branches of ' <i>Irfān</i>	16
The Origin of Islamic ' <i>Irfān</i>	22
Part Two: An Overview of the Teachings of '<i>Irfān</i>	33
Mystical <i>Tawhīd</i> and the Unity of Being	33
The Perfect Man (Vicegerency, <i>Nubuwwah</i> and <i>Wilāyah</i>)	48
Death and Return.....	61
Escape from Death.....	65
Mystics and the Fervor for Death.....	70
The Remembrance of Death and Self-Effacement	75
Practical ' <i>Irfān</i>	76
States and Stations	79
Annihilation in God and Subsistence in God.....	84
Principles of Spiritual Instruction.....	87
Part Three: An Overview of the History of '<i>Irfān</i>	91
The First and Second Centuries A.H.....	92

CONTENTS

Ḥasan Baṣrī:.....	96
Rābi‘ah al-‘Adawiyyah:.....	96
Sufyān Thawrī:.....	96
Ibrāhīm Adham:.....	96
Fuḍayl Ibn ‘Ayād:.....	97
Shaqīq Balkhī:.....	97
Ma‘rūf Karkhī:.....	97
The Third and Fourth Centuries A.H.....	97
Bishr Ḥāfi:.....	98
Ḥārith Muḥāsibī:.....	98
Dhulnūn Miṣrī:.....	98
Sarī Saqaṭī:.....	99
Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī:.....	99
Ḥakīm Thirmidhī (d. 285 A.H.):.....	100
Junayd Baghdādī:.....	100
Ḥallāj:.....	101
Shiblī:.....	103
Ibn Khafīf:.....	103
Abū Naṣr Sarrāj:.....	103
Kulābādī:.....	104
The Fifth Century A.H.	104
Salamī:.....	104
Abul Ḥasan Kharāqānī:.....	104
Shaykh Abū Ishāq Kāzirūnī:.....	105
Bābā Ṭāhir Hamadānī:.....	105
Abū Sa‘īd Abul Khayr:.....	105
Hujwīrī:.....	106
Abū ‘Abdillāh Bākūyah:.....	106
Abul Qāsim Qushayrī:.....	106
Khawājah ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī:.....	106
The Sixth Century A.H.....	107

SPIRITUAL TRADITION

Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī:	107
Aḥmad Ghazālī:	108
‘Ayn al-Quḍāt:	109
Aḥmad Jāmī:	109
Sanā’ī Ghaznawī:	109
‘Abdul Qādir Gīlānī:	110
Abul Najīb ‘Abdul Qāhir Suhrawardī:	110
The Seventh Century A.H.	110
Rūzbihān Baqlī:	111
‘Aṭṭār Nīshābūrī:	111
Najm al-Dīn Kubrā:	112
Shahāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī:	112
Ibn Fāriḍ:	113
Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī:	113
Ibn ‘Arabī:	114
Jalāl al-Dīn Mawlawī:	116
Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī:	118
Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī:	118
Sa’dī Shīrāzī:	118
‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī:	119
The Eighth Century A.H.	119
Shabistarī:	120
Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī:	120
‘Abdul Razzāq Kāshānī:	121
‘Alā al-Dawlah Simnānī:	121
Qayṣarī:	121
Bahā al-Dīn Naqshband:	122
Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī:	122
Maghribī:	125
Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī:	125
The Ninth Century A.H. Onward	126

CONTENTS

Sayyid Qāsim Anwār:.....	126
Kamāl al-Dīn Khwārazmī:.....	127
‘Abdul Raḥmān Jāmī:.....	127
Part Four: Criticism of <i>Sufism</i>	129
Part Five: <i>Taşawwuf</i> and ‘<i>Irfān</i> in <i>Shī‘ism</i>	141
<i>Shī‘ī ‘Irfān</i>	141
Sources of Genuine Islamic ‘ <i>Irfān</i>	145
<i>Taşawwuf</i> and ‘ <i>Irfān</i> in the History of <i>Tashayyu’</i>	149
Some Influential <i>Shī‘ī</i> Mystics and <i>Şūfīs</i>	153
Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī:.....	153
Mīr Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī:.....	154
Ibn Turkah:.....	154
Ibn Abī Jumhūr Aḥsā‘ī:.....	154
Nūrbakhsh:.....	155
Some Non-Official <i>Shī‘ī</i> Mystics	155
Maytham Baḥrānī:.....	155
Sayyid Ibn Ṭāwūs:.....	155
Shahīd Awwal:.....	156
Ibn Fahd:.....	156
Shahīd Thānī:.....	156
Examples of the Later Khānqāh <i>Şūfīs</i>	156
Nayrīzī:	157
Nūr ‘Alī Shāh:.....	157
Şafī ‘Alī Shāh:	157
Sultān ‘Alī Shāh:.....	158
The Decline of Official <i>Taşawwuf</i> and the Inclination towards Piety and ‘ <i>Irfān</i>	159
Islamic Mysticism at a New Juncture	166
<i>Bibliography</i>	171
<i>Index</i>	177

Foreword

Considering necessity of preparing appropriate Islamic texts in English for the modern world and aiming at satisfying that need, Al Mustafa International Research Institute (M.I.R.I.) decided to establish “Islam and West Research Centre” in 2009. This centre has accomplished that duty in the best way by producing, translating, and reprinting tens of such appropriate texts. The present book is among works translated and published by Islam and West Research Centre.

Considering current tendencies towards various mystical schools in the world on the one part, limitedness of the western world’s knowledge of Islamic mysticism to Sufism on the second, and particular point of view of Shiism on mysticism on the third part, *Spiritual Tradition* attempts to deal with this multi-dimension problem in a somehow thorough way.

We hope that this book should form a link showing the way for those who seek advancement.

Islam and West Research Center (I.W.R.C.)

Author's Note

الحمد لله الأول قبل الإنشاء والإحياء، والآخر بعد فناء
الأشياء، العليم الذي لا ينسى من ذكره، و لا ينقص من شكره،
ولا يخيب من دعاه، ولا يقطع رجاء من رجاء.

All Praise belongs to God, the First before the
bringing forth and the giving of life, and the
Last after the annihilation of all things, the
All-knowing who forgets not him who
remembers Him, decreases not him who
thanks Him, disappoints not him who
supplicates Him, and cuts not off the hope of
him who hopes in Him.

The presence over the course of history of various
mystical and spiritual outlooks among the various
cultures and civilizations throughout the world shows
that spirituality, or mysticism, is a genuine human
characteristic with roots in man's essence. Thus, it may be
said that, originally, this outlook is independent of
accidental causal factors, even though the diversity of its
forms can be ascribed to external factors specific to each

school. This outlook is so profound and well-grounded that it has continued to be present in various ways even in materialistic and secular societies. Certain thinkers have predicted that future man will be more inclined to spirituality, and thus we might say that, in the end, man will be either a mystic or not exist at all. The presence of a mystical element in the various religions is so strong that, according to many scholars, the essence of religion is nothing other than mysticism. Mysticism and inner spiritual teachings are inseparable from Islam, and in fact constitute its essence. Manifestations of this mystical or spiritual outlook occur with individual spiritual wayfaring (*sulūk*) and reflection, as well as in various social movements within the Islamic Ummah.

In spite of being sometimes strongly opposed by secular currents and certain traditional religious attitudes, the presence of mysticism is prospering more than ever. Since the days of old, mysticism has been of interest to many Muslim thinkers, and is one of the scientific disciplines which they have untiringly studied. Just as some have pursued mysticism and accepted it, and mystical teachings have been proposed, interpreted and promoted, its opponents have had little success with their criticism and rejection of the *Ṣūfīs* and their teachings. There is no doubt that the mystical tradition is one of the constituents of Islamic culture and Iranian civilization. For this reason, we cannot overlook the importance of study and research in this field of Islamic culture. Furthermore, because of the diversity of mystical schools

and orders, in addition to the impact of a variety of spiritual currents that are increasingly entering the Islamic world from both the East and the West, various dimensions of the Islamic mystical tradition need to be recognized.

To fulfill this need, the present work – which is a chapter of *An Introduction to the History of Islamic Philosophy* – is provided as a separate volume for those who are interested in this topic. Despite its brevity, this book attempts to take a look at *‘irfān* and *Sufism* from various points of view and present them in up-to-date language.

After some preliminary remarks, the following issues are briefly discussed: the origin of *‘irfān* and *Sufism* in the history of Islam; the general ideological principles in genuine Islamic mysticism; some general points concerning practical mysticism; a look at the historical development of mysticism and the introduction of some mystical figures; a look at some of the dangers that threaten *Ṣūfīs*, and mistakes they have made; and a historical and analytic introduction to *Shī‘ī* mysticism.

In the space available in a small volume, it is not possible to cover all the elements of mysticism, nor is the author consider himself immune to error. It is, however, a modest attempt to offer a new approach to an ancient subject, and there are academic studies available which would compensate for any shortcomings in the present work. Much more could be said regarding the particularities of mysticism, and there are also other

AUTHOR'S NOTE

points of view, but with God's help, the author hopes to fulfil his essential task.

I express my sincere gratitude to Professors Ḥujjat al-Islam wa'l Muslimīn, Dr. Aḥmad Aḥmadī and Ḥujjat al-Islam wa'l Muslimīn Ghulāmriḍā Fayyāḍī, who read the present manuscript and provided amendments. I am also grateful to the Research Deputy and the Compilation Department of the Imām Khumaynī Education and Research Institute for their kindness and heartfelt cooperation in publishing the manuscript. I ask success for these good friends from the Presence of the Friend.

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